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ABSTRACT

This paper shares preliminary research findings about the experience of student teachers and mentors working together in a clinical site. The major characteristics of a clinical teaching site are: (1) high school teachers acting as a cohort have an expanded role as teacher educators in their work with student teachers; (2) student teachers also operate as a cohort group; and (3) university faculty work on site with high school faculty and student teachers. The research methodology employed is a model of in-depth phenominological interviewing which operates on the assumption that one makes meaning of his or her experience after reflecting on the constitutive details of that experience. Three 90-minute, in-depth interviews, spaced approximately one week apart, are conducted with each participant. The initial findings indicate that the student teaching cohort and the support of the mentors and university staff do help to ameliorate some of the inherent frustrations associated with student teaching. For the mentors, participation in the clinical site is proving to be a valuable mechanism for providing intellectual and professional renewal. (Author)

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THE COMPLEXITIES OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL: A STUDY THROUGH IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

by

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A paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the
American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
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This paper is based on a collaborative project with East Longmeadow High School, East Longmeadow, Massachusetts. The Co-Directors of the project are Mr. Peter Cannone, Associate Superintendent, East Longmeadow School District, and Dr. Helen Schneider and Professor Earl Seidman of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

The project is supported by the School of Education, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Dr. Marilyn Haring-Hidore, Dean. The project is also supported by a grant from the East Longmeadow School District, Dr. John Drinkwater, Superintendent and a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education, Jamie Lewis, Project Officer.

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ABSTRACT

This paper shares preliminary research findings about the experience of student teachers and mentors working together in a clinical site. The major characteristics of a clinical teaching site are: 1) high school teachers acting as a cohort have an expanded role as teacher educators in their work with student teachers. 2) student teachers also operate as a cohort group. And 3) university faculty work on site with high school faculty and student teachers. The research methodology employed is a model of in-depth phenomenological interviewing which operates on the assumption that one makes meaning of his or her experience after reflecting on the constitutive details of that experience. Three 90 minute, in-depth interviews, spaced approximately one week apart, are conducted with each participant. Our initial findings indicate that the student teaching cohort and the support of the mentors and university staff do help to ameliorate some of the inherent frustrations associated with student teaching. For the mentors, participation in the clinical site is proving to be a valuable mechanism for providing intellectual and professional renewal.

INTRODUCTION

The Professional Development School is a dominant theme in the literature of teacher education reform. The Holmes Group (1986) has made the Professional Development School concept central to their vision of the future of teacher education. John Goodlad (1983) has proposed the site concept as essential to a meaningful practicum. Massachusetts, among other states, has passed legislation which envisions the Professional Development School as central to the future of teacher education in the Commonwealth.

The collaboration which led to the development of our version of a Professional Development School began in 1986 when Peter Cannone was Principal of East Longmeadow High School. (He is now Associate Superintendent.) With the support of East Longmeadow Superintendent, Dr. John Drinkwater, and the East Longmeadow School Committee, Cannone proposed to the Dean of our School of Education that East Longmeadow High School become the equivalent of a "teaching hospital" for our secondary certification candidates. He offered East Longmeadow High School as a welcoming, supportive, clinical site in which cohorts of up to twelve student teachers each semester would experience their practicum. As we explored and developed his initiative, we envisioned a collaboration in which university and high school faculty would work as colleagues in the most crucial aspect of a

teacher's preparation, student teaching.

Cannone's goal was to establish a direct line to the University for two major purposes: 1) He foresaw a teacher shortage and he hoped to establish access to the "best" of the University's teacher education graduates; 2) He wanted to offer his faculty a new sense of professional opportunity and intellectual growth through their participation in the education of new teachers.

The University's goals were to bridge the destructive dichotomy that commonly exists between the efforts of public schools and universities in teacher education. Rather than going hat in hand to a public school asking for their cooperation and then almost completely turning our students over to them, we hoped to establish a collegial, cooperative arrangement with East Longmeadow that would benefit our students, the high school faculty, and our own working lives.

Our clinical site effort was originally and continues to be funded by a grant from the East Longmeadow school district; subsequently we gained the support of the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education. That grant allows us to continue to develop and support the leading effort at East Longmeadow High School. We are also exploring the addition of the Birchland Park Middle School within the East Longmeadow district to our project; and we are developing an additional site at Greenfield High School in Greenfield, Massachusetts. East Longmeadow High School has established itself as a leader in the

Commonwealth among a group of eight schools who have been designated as part of a pilot Professional Development School project. Thus far we have placed forty-one student teachers at the East Longmeadow High School site in the last two and one half years and have worked with thirty-three East Longmeadow faculty who have agreed to work as mentors.

As part of the evaluation component of our FIPSE grant, we have developed a research project based on in-depth, phenomenological interviewing to study our clinical site effort. Our research team has conducted in-depth interviews with eighteen of the student teachers and ten of the mentors who have worked together at East Longmeadow High School.

This paper is a report on the initial findings of our research. What is becoming clear to us as East Longmeadow High School develops into a Professional Development School is that the benefits to our student teachers are significant and positive. In the short run, however, their student teaching experience is often complicated and sometimes double-edged. What we have further learned is that the creation of a cadre of mentor teachers has had significant and telling benefits for those experienced teachers who have worked with us in this project. It is our continued work with that cadre of mentor teachers which will allow us to face and solve over time the complexities of our student teachers' experiences. The positive in-service experience of our mentor teachers holds the key to the Professional Development School's potential for contributing to

teacher education.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research project was designed as the evaluation component of our grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education. The objective of our research was to understand the experience of secondary student teachers and their mentors working in a clinical site and the meaning they made of that experience as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the project. For our research method, we used a model of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing.

In-depth, phenomenological interviewing operates on the assumption that one makes meaning of his or her experience after reflecting on the constitutive details of that experience (Schutz, 1967). The structure of the interviewing process permits access to the concrete details of an experience by allowing the participant to reconstruct and then to reflect on the meaning of that experience. This interviewing model follows a sequence of three 90 minute interviews. (This interview structure is based on the work of Ken Dolbeare and David Schuman. See Schuman, 1982).

The first interview asks the participants to go as far back as they can and reconstruct the concrete events of their family, childhood, school and previous work experiences that have led them to be a student teacher or mentor at this time.

The second interview focuses on the participants' present experience as a student teacher or mentor. The participants

describe and reconstruct the details of their work.

The third and final interview asks the participants what it means to be a student teacher or a mentor. How do they make meaning of their experience. The first and second interviews create the foundation from which the participants can make connections and reflect on the meaning that their work in a clinical site has for them.

Afterwards each of the taped-recorded interviews are transcribed by a secretary. Once the transcripts are typed, the research team works with the material in two ways. Each member of the research team reads the transcripts and marks those passages that they find compelling. Categories of participants' experiences begin to emerge and the research team begins to label the passages that they have marked as compelling. These marked passages are then placed into theme files.

The second way with which we work with the material is in the construction of profiles. A profile is a constructed narrative taken from the participant's three interviews and presented in the words of the participant. The actual words of the participant are not changed except for reasons of clarity or to ensure anonymity. In such cases, the words that are changed or added are placed in brackets. (For further information about the process of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing see Seidman, 1983; 1985.)

In the following section we share initial findings and data which help us understand the experience of student teachers in a

clinical site.

THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDENT TEACHERS IN A CLINICAL SITE

The student teachers who did their student teaching at the clinical site chose to do so for the support of the student teacher cohort, high school mentors, and university faculty and supervisors. Because of this support, a sense of community develops which ameliorates some of the frustrations normally experienced by student teachers; but we find in the initial stages that the clinical site does not totally eliminate the complexities and inherent tensions of the student teaching experience.

We identified three areas which contributed to the complexity of the student teaching experience:

1) The organization of the school as an institution
2) The relationship between the student teachers and the mentors
3) The relationship between the student teachers and the high school students.

In each of these areas, student teachers came to confront the complexity, to rationalize its existence and to anticipate its elimination in the future.

The organization of the school as an institution:

Student teachers like their mentors, work in an institution which functions within a set structure. For example, most schools have a standard curriculum which is measured by tests and grades (Bastian, 1986). Most schools have a tracking system

(Oakes, 1985). Beyond these organizational constraints, there are social forces of race, class and gender that also confront the student teachers and seriously challenge their beliefs of equity. These features both confound and confront student teachers who have to work within the established system. In working in such a system they could air their frustrations within the cohort and with some of the mentors. But as novices they often felt that they couldn't do anything to change the system. One student teacher summed it up by saying "that's the way it is".

The relationship between the student teachers and the mentors:

The mentors have responsibility for their students first and they also have goals for them. In turn, their students also have certain expectations from their teachers. The mentors also have experience that they can draw upon and they try to pass that experience to their student teachers. The relationship between the mentors and the student teachers is made complex by the idealism of the student teachers, their status as novices, and by the fact that the student teachers are in the mentors' classrooms by invitation. We found that some student teachers although respecting the mentor's experience, often wished to do things their own way and often felt that their "hands were tied". On the other hand, some student teachers did take advantage of the flexibility and initiative that their mentors offered and encouraged.

Student teachers have both ideas and ideals and they want to

put those ideas into practice. Sometimes some of their ideas were acknowledged but other times not. For example, issues of structure like grading or adherence to some curricular content were not open to negotiation. Other issues like teaching methodology or adding a new curricular activity were met with greater flexibility by the mentor teachers. Student teacher sometimes could perceive their mentor teachers as inflexible, not realizing or articulating that perhaps their mentor teachers were also restrained by having to adhere to administrative policies enacted by the school committee and overseen by the department chairs. They did not always realize that the source of their frustration was not the mentor but rather institutional policies and politics; nor did they always recognize when their mentors acted as a buffer for the student teachers in order to protect them in their efforts to try out their own ideas. For student teachers, one way of resolving an unanalyzed sense of frustration was to think about how they would turn things around and make it work when they eventually got their own classrooms.

The relationship between student teachers and their students:

The student teachers' experience in dealing with high school students was both rewarding and frustrating at the same time. Rewarding, when a class went well, when there was unsolicited feedback and when the students were motivated to learn. Frustrating, when they acted up, when they were not motivated and when they failed to respect each other in class. Student teachers confront a reality that no adolescent psychology book or

method course can describe; yet the students are the real reason that student teachers endure the teaching practicum and for most of them the reason that they decide to become teachers.

The following profile of one of the student teachers encompasses many of the above issues and presents in the student teacher's own words what student teaching meant to him.

THOMAS O'NEILL

[Thomas O'Neill student taught in 1988 and presently is teaching full time at a high school in Massachusetts.]

I came to the point of deciding where to student teach. ... There's a lot of competition looking for student teaching places. I decided to go with [the clinical site] because it was offering this group environment which I'm very interested in -the support system that the group offers in any situation, the family, the community. I'm interested in the whole group thing, -the strength of the group, and I knew a lot of the people who were heading down. So I went down there and it's worked out real well. I couldn't imagine working in a school where I was the only student teacher. I mean that I could do it, but there is so much more that this group has offered in terms of just sharing experience. Everybody is willing to share their experience.

My interest resides in literature. I have a lot of knowledge in that area and I [will] always continue to build on that as a teacher. I can continue to write, but at the same time I can work with young people or people in general which is

where I think I need to be. I think I need to be working with people in some kind of environment like that.

[As far as teaching is concerned] I'm pretty much following along the format that my mentor teacher has laid out over the course of the year. We try to do 2 or 3 activities per class. These always include literature and either vocabulary or grammar and they include some reading comprehension in English 9.

The vocabulary is taught the same way in both the English 9 and 11 courses. We're working in a vocabulary book. I'm finding [that the books] are very dated, some of them as far back as 1961. There is a standardized vocabulary test at the high school for each of the grades. It's very much a curriculum controlled thing and so the teachers fall into the "you have to cover the material trap otherwise the kids are not going to be able to pass". It's a real SAT oriented thing in a lot of high schools. ... I know that it's all pressure from the parents for kids to have training to score well on a SAT vocabulary section... What I would prefer to do is to have the kids create a vocabulary list out of the literature we're working in. That would be kind of a cooperative effort to create a vocabulary list the first day that the class meets that week. I think that when you work with the students' vocabulary, work with the literature and draw all the vocabulary word out of the literature, it's much more practical, it has more meaning.

The English department set down the way English grammar is going to be taught. My mentor teacher doesn't like the grammar

book either, doesn't like that approach. He wants to teach it through problems that arise in peoples' writing. If you teach grammar though writing, the students will be able to see why they need [grammar]. They'll be able to see the results. It will have meaning for them.

...In the expository writing class we have the students spend about 5 days going through all the essays they've written and making a self evaluation chart and just evaluating the kinds of mistakes they were making. ...they have to work with sentences and see how the mistake is made and correct it. I think that most of the time people are making mistakes with commas and very simple mistakes that are easy to handle. I don't think you need to teach people grammar out of a Warreners book. I think it is a waste of time, because I happen to believe the researcher who says "teaching grammar doesn't improve people's ability to learn language, doesn't improve their ability to learn a foreign language, doesn't improve their ability to write", all of the reasons why people want to teach students grammar. They think that people are going to have this ability to take these abstract principles and apply them into their practical lives and it doesn't work that way. You learn things like grammar through using it.

My ninth grade class is an interesting class for me. They're a basic track, which is the lowest track. They don't do homework for the most part. They won't do the reading outside of class, so ... I'll assign a page or so of reading to each student and

they'll read that part of the story and then they'll discuss it. ... Each student will tell what happened and I'll ask them questions. We'll try to put together some meaning of the story through this method. The method that I have just described is working. I just want them to enjoy the story, for the story's sake. Stories are magic in that people can just latch on to them and go on little adventures.

Now we are in this video project which is different. I'm working with them much closer and doing something that they really enjoy. All the scenes pretty much focus around what life is really like for the student. There are a few bathroom scenes, which is the community meeting place for the students. We have the office where students go and get reprimanded. It's a place [for] keeping order. We have internal suspension, we have parking lot, we have lunch, we have gym. There's going to be a dance where everything comes together - all the conflicts and resolutions are brought out. It's going to happen at the end of the video tape. We had all these scenes and then someone said, "What about the classroom? We don't a classroom scene." I was just taking their ideas and writing them on the board. I said, "Okay, maybe we need a classroom scene." I was perfectly willing to make this [video] without it, because it's their screen play. If they want to [make] a [video] about school without a classroom, that's fine. I'm really excited about the way the whole thing is going because it makes a lot a sense to the students and [they] are really turned on to it. They really want

to stay after school and work on this project. My goal, my only goal really, my initial goal [is] the writing. To get them to write.

One thing that's really come up since I've started this whole thing is I keep asking myself questions: Am I going to be able to do this? What am I going to do? I don't really know, I mean this is a very unusual circumstance, to be in. I'm in somebody else's environment. The responsibility is theirs. I'm borrowing so I must be careful with it. ...

I think it's very difficult because it's not my classroom. I can't decorate the walls with material, I can't give the final grades. That's the bottom line with the kids, the grades. ... I've come to the conclusion that it's probably easier to student teach at the beginning part of the year. Because then you're starting new with the kids. When I came in new in February the kids had been there since September, so, I've [had] to adjust. The whole idea of coming in midway, midterm [is not] changing the pattern of the classroom because it would really upset the apple cart. The kids just wouldn't stand for it, who would?

My mentor teacher is very straight forward. There's nothing that I really can't talk to him about. We've had conversations about our families and ourselves which I was really glad to have. ... Basically, we trust each other.

I've picked up a lot of good material...[that] I'm going to keep on file on teaching writing: what's important and how, the pros and cons, the ups and downs of the class....

At times I'm not happy at having to work within certain restrictions [that] the [system] demands, but I think that there's always a need to for change, a need for people who open doors. I could be one of those people. I could just slow down and work within the system and try to bring about that change somehow.

The chances are I'm going to be working in a tracked system. The majority of schools are tracked. You have tracking so that ability groups will learn at their respective levels. What happens is that the fast kids take off and those are the kids who are really catered to and the lower track kids over time, I think, get dumped on. I don't think that you can just put the burden on the teacher. It's certainly not the teachers' fault because the teachers are in a system. The teachers are working within that system. They're doing what they can within that system. Usually the curriculum in the lower tracks is wide open because you don't have to cover a certain amount of material. They don't have to know all the nuances of Victorian literature.

Right now I'm having [students] write screen plays. [By] putting them in a position as writers, in a situation that they enjoy, they're writing about stuff that they like. Not stuff that I think is important that they should write about. The ideal situation is to get kids to develop a sense of self. I think that the lower track kids might have the inside track on developing their sense of self. They're not so worried about the material. A lot of them are really bull headed. They're real

close and they are also very much less inhibited than faster track kids are. So you can really talk to them on their level and they can understand you.

One of the things that really drives me is literature. I mean the story itself; what is conveyed, how writers do it. I'm writing myself trying to convey situations, feelings, characters, lives through words. That's going to be one of the driving forces in my teaching... because I feel that ... it's the way that I make meaning with my life.

My whole philosophy of teaching in the high school is that I want to give kids a voice. I want to give them a sense of self and responsibility,... but they have to be mature enough to take all that. I mean it sounds nice on paper, sounds real nice in theory but when you get right down to it five days a week it's tough for some of these kids. So I guess what I'm looking for in making meaning in the whole experience is how I can make meaning for the high school students. How can I give the high school student something that will be meaningful? I want [to teach] my class critical thinking because I think from critical thinking comes responsibility. I want to empower high school students....

Part of the meaning of student teaching is wondering whether I have the patience, to work in a high school, a public school setting. It's also opened up my mind [about] where I want to work. I might want to work with kids who have been cast off as losses. It's hard to tell, given such a short span of time,... if I've really affected them academically. So, I'm looking for

affective results. The highest point is the exhilaration of just being in the class with the kids and having them react to me, having them being able to work with me.

THE EXPERIENCE OF MENTORS IN A CLINICAL SITE

As we indicated earlier, the original purposes of the clinical site as described by the founding partners were to 1) find a hospitable environment for the university's student teachers and 2) allow the school district to have first access to promising young teachers. While our initial focus was on the experience of the student teachers, our research shows that the project has had a profound effect on the experienced teachers who were recruited to serve as mentors.

While their experience is complex and it would be foolhardy to ignore problems that have surfaced in the three years of the project, the verdict from the mentors is overwhelmingly positive. The clinical site seems to be an effective setting for staff development both through direct programming, such as course work, and through more indirect means, such as interaction with a beginning teacher. In interview after interview the mentor teachers describe the positive effects of their work with student teachers. Some examples are a new awareness of their own teaching, an improved sense of themselves as professionals, and a heightening of self esteem in a society that rarely rewards teachers for their efforts or excellence and considers them marginal professionals at best.

We believe that the excerpts that follow illustrate that participation in a teacher education collaborative has significant benefits for the mentor teachers as well as for the other partners in the collaboration.

We have divided our illustrative material from the mentor teacher interviews into the following categories:

1. Complexities and risks
- loss of contact with students
- burdensome time commitment
- risk of failure and conflict with the student teacher

2. Rewards of mentoring project
- sense of renewed career opportunity
- breakdown of teacher isolation
- improvement of the mentor teacher's own teaching through heightened awareness and further formal education
- increased sense of self esteem
- opportunity to learn new developments from student teacher
- relationship to the university
- sense of providing a better student teaching experience for a new teacher than was provided for them in their own training

1. Complexities and Risks:

If a mentoring program selects the "best", most committed teachers, and then replaces them at least temporarily in the classroom, there will inevitably be an interruption--some would say a disruption--in their relationship with their own students.

Such teachers rarely let go of their students without considerable pain, even guilt, as the following passages will illustrate:

One of the problems I had, I'll be very honest with you, is when kids come up to me in the halls ... when the practice teacher's not around, and privately ask me when I am coming back and things like that.... I don't know how to deal with that. ...

Well you want to be part of it all the time. You want to get up there and do it yourself. That's a normal thing I guess. You want to take over because it's your class. The kids are bonded to me; I'm bonded to them too;... it works in both directions. I want to get up and teach the class, especially things that I've taught before. I know how to do it, and it's fun to do it because certain things that work are fun for a teacher. And those are the hard things to give up, but you've got to. You can't just take over every time, or there wouldn't be any sense to having a practice teacher.

Committed teachers also miss teaching favorite units or lessons when they give their classes over to student teachers. One mentor said,

I miss teaching. I don't know if I can be more explicit than that. ...I saved ... [my favorite unit] until the end because I felt I wanted to do it myself. I'm looking forward to getting back into the classroom and teaching. It makes me feel good as a person.

Some teachers experience a mix of anxiety and eagerness as they anticipate taking their classes back:

[I'm anxious] about getting back up there because the kids have become familiar with her and they see me sitting in the back and, I don't know how they are going to react to me now. I don't think any differently, but you never know. I wouldn't want them to say, "Oh the real teacher is back", but I don't know how they will treat me. I'm curious about whether they would become more interactive. But those are unknowns that I think I'm going to be faced with. It's just a feeling that I have about the class after not having them for so long.

Those mentors who see their role as a professional commitment and not a way to garner extra free periods also

experience a sense of overwhelming work load:

To be an effective mentor you have to plan out in your mind how you're going to evaluate this person. You have to be organized and it's very important for people to realize how much time it takes up, ... that it just eats so much of your school day time. Just talking, just general talking.

It's very time consuming. I have a real hard time because I am torn in a lot of directions with my job. I have to put some quality time into this person. You meet right after that class. It isn't good enough to meet the next day. Wherever possible you've got to meet the same day, right after if possible, and talk about what happened in that class, good or bad, and get that relationship going with that person, immediate feedback. So there's a real time problem to do it right. So you can see the temptation that teachers have had in the past just to turn the youngster loose in the room and I'll correct papers or drink coffee or whatever, take a period off and that not give him any...how could they give him any feedback? ... So to do it right it's time consuming. There's potential that you might be dealing with a person that's going to fail, so it's going to be a very bad experience for him. That kid is going to decide that this is not what he wants to do. I think that's very important that this practice teaching experience provide that choice. That's clearly as important as saying, Yes, I do want to do it. And you have to be willing I think to accept the risk, the emotional risk of being involved with a person who's going to go through that, through failure.

Another teacher spoke of the time it took from her own

preparation:

It's very time consuming though, very time consuming. You have to be careful that you strike a balance between your responsibility with her and your responsibility with your own students because you can't get so immersed in what she's doing that [you] then lose your head and forget that you have your own responsibilities and you want to do a good job at what you're doing too. And at first I was finding I was just so immersed in making sure [my student teacher] was doing a good job, that there were a couple of days when I walked into my own classes not as, 100% prepared as I wanted to be. I could still get through the course and maybe no one would even notice, but I knew. I just felt pressed. I didn't feel as relaxed as I could because I couldn't shift ... gears from her to me as well as I wanted to. Because so much of my time was being taken up with her. ...
... it takes a lot of energy to keep a person up when they're, things aren't going well, and it takes a lot of energy to sit in the back of the classroom when things aren't going well and then to try to figure out how can I make things go well, how can I

help things to go well.

It is also hard for a good teacher to watch someone else falter:

It's draining to sit in the back of a classroom and watch someone who's inexperienced and who is trying their hardest to do a good job and it just isn't working the way they want it to. It's, draining because it's your class and you know what you want to be going on. ... Watching people struggling with material is difficult for me; watching people not know the answers to questions and just struggle through a lesson. That's 55 minutes of watching someone struggling and I just don't take these things lightly. These were emotional times for me just trying to pinpoint what was going well and what wasn't going well and where she could improve.

Some teachers even worry about what the reaction of parents will be to their "abdication:"

It could run into parental problems if a parent calls up and says, "Hey, this intern is not teaching the class the way it should be, there's too much interaction and my son or daughter is not getting enough instruction."

But most mentors overcome these problems and encourage the student teacher to be himself or herself, to try new ideas and find their own styles:

The intern has to have enough freedom and enough independence and enough stamina, ... to adapt what she sees to her own ways. And if she's afraid to do that I don't think she'll be a good teacher. And I don't think that the mentor teacher is a good mentor if she allows that practice teacher to be afraid to try her own way. I would hate to have somebody come in and do what I do. I think it's embarrassing to say, "Hey look at me, I'm a teacher, I am paid for what I do. Watch me and do it."

2. Rewards of Mentoring Project

One of the most important findings of our interviewing research is that mentoring confers new dignity on veteran teachers and gives them an opportunity to be more thoughtful about their teaching. Most mentors, even those who may have been

skeptical in the beginning, describe a sense of renewed opportunity in their teaching careers:

I think I can honestly say that having ... the opportunity to be a mentor teacher really has made me more aware of how important my role is in teaching, as an educator.

Another teacher said:

Having people in my room watching me all the time has occurred so frequently in the last couple of years. Then to have some of those people say to me, "Gee that was a good class" or "I was watching the kids and it seemed like every kid was really listening to what you were talking about." Those kinds of things have made me see myself through someone else's eyes who is looking at me professionally and who is providing me with information about the methods I'm employing and the outcomes they see. That makes me think sometimes, gee maybe I am accomplishing something, because as you know, students on a day-to-day basis are not in the habit of informing you of that.

Another mentor teacher concluded, "I think the whole project is making me love what I do even more."

Perhaps the most dramatic theme to emerge, however, is the breakdown of the individual teacher's sense of isolation. Mentor teacher after mentor teacher mentioned their lack of communication prior to their participation in the project. This desire to share with colleagues, so long submerged in the daily routine, has begun to be met by their work in the mentoring seminars and has altered to a considerable degree and for the good their relationships with fellow teachers. One teacher said in his interview, "I think the thing that's really important is the sharing aspect."

The following excerpts from different mentors' interviews clearly illustrate the point:

This whole idea of getting out of the isolation of the classroom and extending yourself into other things about teaching,

extending yourself into helping another person and into communicating with other people, it's just right up my alley.

It's given me an opportunity just to talk with other colleagues, to share my feelings, whether they be good or bad, about teaching, I don't think teachers ever get an opportunity to do that.

One teacher spoke about how she loved the new interaction but how it could make her vulnerable:

I don't think I've ever sat down and discussed teaching with another teacher. And sometimes I remember, you know, when I first became involved in the program and you had to talk to other teachers about what you were doing, about your teaching skills, about what you knew, I thought, boy, you're really vulnerable. That created a little bit of uncomfortableness because you never really have an opportunity to do that and here now you're faced with sitting down and talking about your teaching style and your methods of teaching and sharing that with other people.

But for that teacher and most of those in the project the interaction was valued as the following excerpts illustrate:

In education the only interaction that you really have is with your students. You don't interact with your staff about what you're doing.

There is some community, it's a smaller one than I had hoped, and a smaller one than I want, but there's some community of people that I can relate to and with, which gives me satisfaction. And in fact, that's grown and what we're doing with the University has made that much nicer for me. I mean, good heavens, I love that stuff. So that's helped me a lot so I don't feel that isolation as much now; ... [before this project] I don't think I've ever sat down and discussed teaching with another teacher.

We've interacted about what her intern is doing and about what my intern is doing. The common bond there has been our interns. I'll see her just in passing in the hallway or something and we'll talk about it a little bit.

Mentoring just happens to complement the kinds of collaborative learning that I like to do. I like very much to learn with other people and I think it over the years has been a weakness in this system--I expect in most systems--that we don't work together well. We isolate ourselves in class. We've heard these things a million times. They're true. I'm the kind of person that likes very much to work with other professionals ... and to me that's the reward in and of itself. Mentoring becomes another way to do

that. ... If you look at other teachers who are involved in this project, they ... feel the need to share, the need to work together, and enjoy doing that. You just don't get that working alone. ... Sharing is what drives it.

We prepare things together for presentations. We now have similar kinds of experiences and problems to analyze and discuss. We have to meet and talk about things, where we might not do that normally. It's more systematic now, [not] just happenstance as it has been in the past. It's more a systematic way of getting at each other.

It's given me the opportunity just to talk with other colleagues, to share my feelings, whether they be good or bad, about teaching. I don't think teachers ever get an opportunity to do that.

Many teachers reported that participation in the project gave them a heightened awareness of their own teaching. They therefore felt that they were becoming better teachers themselves:

It's helping me to be a better teacher because as I evaluate my student teacher and think of new methods to help her and to evaluate her I also go through this whole evaluation with myself all the time on my own lessons and my own teaching. So by being a mentor teacher, I am helping someone else plus helping myself to be a better teacher. That is what I like about it.

The program has made me realize that I should expand my education, to further my education, to become a better mentor teacher or even to become a better teacher. I think sometimes when teachers remain in the field, they often can become very stagnant. One thing that the project has done for me is it's allowed me to further my education. I'm presently enrolled in a Master's degree at Springfield College. I don't think I would have enrolled [if not for the program.] This was an incentive for me to further my education.

I'm learning to examine my own teaching techniques far more carefully than I did in previous years; ... why does something work or not work? [I'm beginning] to really begin to look very closely at those things. Can I transfer this to somebody else or not and if so, how do you transfer it to somebody?

I think it's a chance for my development personally as a teacher. It enables me to listen and to observe and to gather from others--some of my colleagues and also from the practice teachers--

things that I should be thinking about and incorporating in my classes where appropriate. It's almost like a synthesis for me; it's the opportunity for me to look at the big picture rather than to look at [teaching] from the rather parochial view of a single person in one room with a bunch of kids.

Particularly among the women, there was a sense of increased self esteem as a result of being identified as a mentor. Teachers who had previously felt that they may not have been appreciated reported a new respect from their colleagues. One female mentor said:

... one thing I must say this project has promoted is an increase in female status here. I feel people look up to you if you're in the program, and if you're female your status is increased here as a colleague. I feel if anything this project has given women a more equal status here ... you are treated as an equal. Being a female, other staff look up to you if you're involved in this program. They see you as a master teacher or as a mentor teacher. It's something new, it's something exciting, it's something different, and this whole project has stirred up a lot of enthusiasm in the staff. We do presentations or are involved on the steering committee-- people see that, staff see that, and they look up to you. I have more pride in myself. I feel good that I'm involved.

A few teachers reported learning new techniques and subject material from their student teachers:

We were able to share and exchange ideas. For example her expertise is in the field of human sexuality and we had discussions about materials and obstacles that she might be faced with. It made me realize maybe that with all the new material coming out in health education that you need to continually update yourself. If you don't, you become stagnant, you're not up on new issues, you're not involved in the new materials.

A lot of times I've said to him, "Thank you," and he says, "No, I'm going to thank you." It's been mutual. He's done a lot of things for me and the reverse, I've done some things for him.

Oftentimes you're learning, you're seeing something that you never thought of. Or he's doing something better than you've done it in 20 years...I mean those moments happen fairly frequently.

She had a lot of knowledge, different approaches, that I picked her brain for, that we discussed and I learned from her,

intellectual approaches.

Others said that the connection to the university was a valuable resource and a source of fresh ideas:

By doing this I get to have contacts with other people, particularly people from UMass, who I enjoy working with and I enjoy talking to. I've been up to [university classes] and have done a presentation with another faculty member; all of this just fits together [for me] as a teacher.

I like having people coming from the university and relating with them because it's something out of the high school and away from the people that I normally see. They're like a breath of fresh air. It's a good feeling being involved with so many people and working on this project together.

Finally, a number of the teachers have a sense of pride in helping to provide a practicum that is superior both to their own many years ago and to the student teaching experience they gave to others in the recent past before the project.

I know that when I had the intern from the college, I didn't have the opportunity to interact with other colleagues about what I was doing or what my intern was doing. It was really just between my student teacher and myself....

I think this is a far superior way of working with a practice teacher. The way I'd always worked [before] was the head of your department would say, "Would you mind having a practice teacher? There's one coming from (who knows where) and would you mind?" And you'd say, "No that's all right." You'd just sit and observe but there was no interaction with her teachers at all and there really was very little interaction.

The work as a mentor specifically? I think it's necessary that teachers be trained in a formalized, systematic, organized fashion. And I think most teachers in my generation would agree with that. But also agree that probably was not done with us. Your training was either good or bad, but it was definitely haphazard.

I feel that we as mentor teachers being part of this program take a much more active role than the ordinary teacher out in the ordinary school. I think it's an intense experience, but I think we are not aloof, we are right in there with them all the time for the whole 15 weeks. There's never a time when I said, "See you later." I just don't think that's right for anybody, the

students or [the student teacher] or myself.

I look back at my own practice teaching with a little rueful smile. I'd be glad not to have someone do that. I would never put anybody in the situation where they didn't know what they were going to do or talk very much to them.

[In my own student teaching] I kind of felt in the beginning, day one, I was kind of thrown to the wolves, so to speak, because I was just handed a grade book and I didn't really have an observation period. If I did, it was very, very short. But, I was really asked to take on students immediately. I found it difficult. My cooperating supervisor was very critical; I felt a lot was demanded of me.

And I was committed to the theoretical notion, that we needed to do something better in the way of preparation of teachers. Because my experience of having practice teachers, probably two or three of them, was pretty negative. You try to do the best you can, but there was no cooperation with the [college] involved. So I thought this sounds intriguing; let's see where it goes. I found the process very interesting, sitting down with professionals such as yourself and getting caught up on a lot of theoretical kinds of things as well as practical kinds of research.

I think that it's intense, much more intense than anything I ever went through when I was a student teacher. But, I feel it's good because they have a support system. We as mentor teachers being part of this program take a much more active role than the ordinary teacher out in the ordinary school.

CONCLUSION

We have now completed our first round of working with the interview material from our research and evaluation project. We are continuing to interview student teachers who are placed in the clinical site at East Longmeadow High School and the mentors who work with them. The data provide a complex picture, but one that gives us confidence. We have learned that the Professional Development School does not immediately solve all the problems that are inherent in the student teaching process. It may even highlight some of the complexities. But, the benefits to the

student teachers of the peer support in their cohort is clear. An additional benefit is the closer interaction among student teachers, school faculty and university faculty that occurs at the clinical site.

Participation in the development of a professional development school at East Longmeadow has led to a process in which equity between university and school faculty has begun to be established. Each of us is learning to respect the role and the contribution of the other. Over time, structural issues in both the public schools and the university's teacher education program which affect the student teachers' experience become subjects of consideration. Our work together has shown that the dichotomy that so often separates school and university faculty can be bridged. In realizing that the dichotomy between school and university can be proven false, we see the long run potential of the Professional Development School.

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